



For Immediate Release
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DMHC names Health Advocate to oversee transition of Kaiser's Kidney Transplant program

(Sacramento) -- The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) has named Allison Kregness, R.N., as its Kidney Health Advocate to oversee the transition of patients from Kaiser Foundation Health Plan's kidney transplant program to alternate hospitals, such as UC San Francisco and UC Davis.

As the DMHC's Kidney Health Advocate, Kregness will monitor all aspects of the transition process to ensure that all patients are properly prioritized on waiting lists for potential transplant. She will review and approve all transition protocols for safety and efficiency, and work with the receiving hospital transition teams to ensure that all necessary patient authorizations and medical records are transferred. She will also verify that patients have been scheduled for an initial appointment, have been successfully transferred to the appropriate transplant list, and receive the highest quality of care possible.

"We are very fortunate to have the services of Ms. Kregness, with her extensive training and background with treating kidney transplant patients, combined with her first-hand experience in developing and overseeing renal dialysis programs," said Cindy Ehnes, Director of the DMHC. "Her job is to make sure that the welfare of these patients comes first in every decision that is made during the transition process, and that no one falls between the cracks. These patients have already experienced significant stress and discouragement, and we want to assure them that they have an advocate at the DMHC who has their best interests at heart."

Kregness, a registered nurse and a Certified Nephrology Nurse, is currently Executive Director of the TransPacific Renal Network 17, a private nonprofit corporation in San Rafael,

(more)

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one of 18 Medicare-funded organizations established by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1977 to implement a regional system of health care for patients with end stage renal disease. Network 17 serves 45 counties in northern California (from the Oregon border to Fresno), the state of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and Saipan. Each network is a watchdog organization that ensures that facilities in its area adhere to Medicare regulations. Facilities not in compliance may lose federal funding.

“As a certified nephrology nurse, I have worked in all areas of treating kidney disease, from dialysis to caring for transplant patients, in addition to managing both renal and quality improvement programs,” said Kregness. “I am excited to have the opportunity to use those skills to help these patients, making sure that they are safely transitioned and to improve their life situations.”

Kregness received her nursing degree from St. Vincent Nursing School at Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa, and has worked with kidney transplant programs since 1973. She is a member of the American Nephrology Nurses Association and the National Renal Administrators Association.

The California Department of Managed Health Care is the only stand-alone HMO watchdog agency in the nation, touching the lives of more than 21 million enrollees. The Department has assisted more than 633,000 Californians resolve their HMO problems through its 24-hour Help Center, educates consumers on health care rights and responsibilities, and works closely with HMO plans to ensure a solvent and stable managed health care system.

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